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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 IO-13 ORM-02 SS-15
SP-02 INR-07 INRE-00 PRS-01 /049 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9720
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATOR DERIAN AND ARA/ECA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, AR, OVIP (DERINA, PATRICIA)
SUBJECT: PRESS TREATMENT OF DERIAN VISIT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2195

1. MARCH 23 EMBOFFS CALLED AT FONMINISTRY ON DEPUTY CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, HEAD OF NORTH AMERICAN SECTION, AND DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP TO DISCUSS DERIAN VISIT AND PROPOSED CALLS AT THE FORNMINISTRY. FORNOFFICE OFFICIALS AGREED TO WED MORNING SCHEDULE SET FORTH IN REFTEL, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT IN A POSITION TO ASSURE THAT AN APPOINTMENT WITH FORNMINISTER HIMSELF WOULD BE POSSIBLE. IF NOT, THEY FELT CONFIDENT THAT APPOINTMENT WITH UNDER SECRETARY ALLARE COULD BE ARRANGED.

2. DURING CONVERSATION IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS WERE VERY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT DERIAN VISIT, PARTICULARLY THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PRESS, EITHER DOMESTIC OR US, MIGHT CHARACTERIZE HER VISIT AS AN INVESTIGATION OF ARGENTINE DOMESTIC SITUATION. EMBOFFS POINTED TO SATISFACTORY BRAY VISIT IN DECEMBER

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AND EXPRESSED HOPE DERIAN VISIT WOULD FOLLOW SAME PATTERN. HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATOR ARLIA INSISTED THAT SITUATION HAD CHANGED MARKEDLY SINCE BRAY VISIT; SECRETARY OF STATE HAD MADE PUBLIC STATEMENT ACCUSING

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Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP
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GOA OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND USG HAD IMPOSED SANCTIONS ON GOA. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, TO HAVE A HIGH USG OFFICIAL WHOSE TITLE IS COORDINATOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT ARGENTINA WOULD ALMOST INEVITABLY LEAD PRESS TO CONCLUDE THAT AN INVESTIGATION WAS UNDER WAY. ARLIA SAID THAT THIS SITUATION PRESENTED GOA WITH A SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL RISK.

3. ARLIA ASKED IF USG WAS PREPARED TO GUARANTEE THAT DEPARTMENT OF STATE WOULD ISSUE A STATEMENT OF CORRECTION IF PRESS CHARACTERIZED DERIAN VISIT AS AN INSPECTION.

4. EMBOFFS RESPONDED THAT IT WAS CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT DERIAN VISIT WAS ONE OF FAMILIARIZATION, THAT SHE WOULD BE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN INSIGHT INTO SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. EMBOFFS BELIEVED THAT SHE WOULD NOT BE AT ALL RELUCTANT TO DENY INVESTIGATIVE ROLE TO PRESS IF SITUATION SO REQUIRED. EMBOFFS STATED THAT TACTICS ON DEALING WITH PRESS WERE RESPONSIBILITY OF DEPARTMENT'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION WHICH USES TACTICS IT DETERMINES MOST APPROPRIATE FOR SITUATION. WE COULD NOT GUARANTEE A DEPARTMENTAL DENIAL ON MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS, BUT WE WERE CONFIDENT THAT FROM CONCERN SHOWN IN DEPARTMENT'S MESSAGES ON THIS VISIT THAT PRECIPITATION OF EMBARRASSING INCIDENT FOR GOA WAS FURTHEST THING FROM MS DERIAN'S MIND. WE STATED THAT DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY FULLY SHARED GOA CONCERN AND WE INTENDED TO MAKE ALL APPROPRIATE EFFORTS TO PREVENT VISIT FROM BEING CHARACTERIZED AS AN INVESTIGATION. EMBOFFS WERE UNAWARE THAT FONOFFICE HAD JUST BEFORE OUR

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MEETING ISSUED STATEMENT REJECTING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT. THIS EVENT UNDOUBTEDLY ENHANCED FONOFFICE SENSITIVITY.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY THE MINISTRY OFFICIALS OVER THE POSSIBLE PRESS TREATMENT OF THE VISIT IS A LEGITIMATE ONE. WE SUGGEST THAT BEST COURSE OF ACTION TO FORESTALL POSSIBLE MISLEADING REPORTING ON VISIT WOULD BE A BRIEF DEPARTMENTAL STATEMENT ANNOUNCING MS DERIAN'S TRIP WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MENTION OF HER STOP IN BRAZIL AND THAT SHE ALSO INTENDED TO CONSULT WITH THE US AMBASSADOR

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IN URUGUAY. IF SUCH A STATEMENT IS NOT FEASIBLE,
EMBASSY URGES THAT AS A MINIMUM DEPT BE PREPARED TO
ISSUE APPROPRIATE CLARIFICATION OF NATURE OF
DERIAN VISIT SHOULD CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE IT.
FYI: NYTIMES CORRESPONDENT JUAN DE ONIS WAS AWARE
THIS MORNING OF DERIAN VISIT AND PLANS TO DELAY A
SCHEDULED TRIP TO COVER IT.
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